





Research Paper for Migration Research Unit

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Analyzing the Gaps in Local Integration of Refugees in Urban Societies;

Focusing on the Case of African Refugees in Cairo

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Introduction

The world has been suffering from forceful displacement over the last decades, according to UNHCR report of 2020, the number of people forcefully fleeing their countries of origin has almost been doubled in the last decades reaching 82.4 million, shaping the highest number on record. Forced displacement is more likely to affect one percent of humanity. In 2020, the total number of refugees increased to reach 26.5 million, and 86% of the aforementioned refugee population are location in developing countries (UNHCR - 2020 Mid-Year Trends report).

During the last decades, the response of the international community toward forcibly displaced people has changed from being a camp-centric approach to refugees urbanization; meaning that most refugees are not living in the camps, but in urban areas throughout the country. This change has made the situation more difficult than it was for the refugees communities. Egypt is a country that welcomes refugees into cities not camps and had become a country of asylum for various nationalities escaping conflicts, war and protection risks on their lives. However, by crossing the boarders and dreaming with a safe life, the war did not end for them, as they still fight for their integration within the urban society that they entered seeking asylum. Refugees urbanization has contributed as an obstacle for the integration of African Population in Egypt as they faces a battle to be integrated within the society, obstacles as stereotyping, the psychological distress, being clustered in a certain sectors of the economy and not being able to claim their rights and the assistance services provided for them by International organizations.

The research paper will tackle the main gaps and challenges that refugees face in order to achieve integration, during the era of Refugee Urbanization; focusing on the African population in Egypt. Through analyzing the definitions integration of the African population in Egypt from three

aspects: economic, political and social. The research will also focus on the results of such challenges on the Egyptian society, and the benefits falling on the Egyptian society if these challenges are solved through looking at lesson learned from other countries.

Literature Review

The majority of the literature on refugees and asylum seekers has concentrated on living circumstances in camps and settlements rather than in urban centers. However, as more refugees come to cities, the literature has recently begun to highlight the issues and living conditions that they face. In this study, the relevant literature will focus on the definition of refugees and asylum seekers (Goodwin-Gil, 1996), refugee law (Hathaway, 1997), local integration (Jacobsen, 2001), and the challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in developing countries (Loescher, 2009), particularly Egypt. The extent of integration among these communities in asylum nations has not been quantified in the literature. In and of itself, the disagreement about the term integration creates issues in analysis and research. This has piqued scholars' interest in recent years, as seen by Katarzyna Grabska's (2006) study on urban migrants in Cairo, which addressed the issues they face in a city setting. NGO's and international organizations have been paying close attention to refugees in urban settings in order to analyses the services given to this community. This review will look at the extant literature on refugees in cities, with the goal of focusing on policy development in this area. The literature focus on: asylum-seeking countries' concerns.

There is a wide range of literature on the primary concerns of asylum countries in dealing with refugees in their individual countries. The research has largely concentrated on the security, economic, and public concerns associated with receiving refugees. The current global political climate, combined with international terrorism, has resulted in a large influx of refugees, posing

challenges for host countries to absorb them and for refugees to reclaim their livelihoods. Political disputes have produced situations that make it difficult for refugees to return to their homelands. However, security concerns as well as international terrorism make governments less likely to accept these migrants for resettlement (Ianchovichnia et al., 2015).

Legal framework for Local Integration

Egypt is currently one of the countries facing a major refugee influx due to its geographic location. There are currently 267,820 refugees and 250, 600 Asylum Seekers in Egypt, of which there are 197.820 refugees, and 179,600 asylum seekers who have been assisted by (UNHCR, 2020). The main groups of people of concern to the UNHCR originate from Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2020). The international treaties and Memorandum of Understanding that Egypt has signed and ratified frame the legal framework for the local integration of African Refugees in Egypt.

Egypt, as a signatory to the 1951 Refugees Convention and its 1967 Protocol, provides freedom of movement, religion, and residency to the refugee population living on its territory. In addition to that, Egypt is a signing party in the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention (OAU), which emphasizes on the collaboration between African countries on the refugees challenges through granting the concept of non-refoulment. The last legal frame controlling the integration of African population on the Egyptian lands is the Memorandum of Understanding between Egypt and UNHCR, which highlights the role of the state and the mandate of UNHCR to ensure providing protection for those who fall under UNHCR mandate (Dessouki, A. E. H. 1982).

Egypt, on the other hand, has reservations about the 1951 Convention, particularly articles 20 and 22-24, which grant refugees the same rights as citizens in terms of primary education, employment, social security, and public aid. The reservations relate to the item on personal status as well (Blay et. al, 1999). These reservations prevent these articles from becoming legally binding. Refugees would also be denied access to essential services that they require in order to assimilate to Egyptian society because of these reservations (Tsamenyi, B. M 1990). As a result, it is apparent that Egypt's

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current system produces a climate that is resistant to local integration. This creates legal barriers that alienate Egypt's refugee and asylum seeker groups and obstruct the social processes that are needed to help them (Emilsson, 2012).

After presenting the legal framework that, control the local integration for refugees in Egypt. The following part will analyze the reservation made by the Egyptian government and how they contribute in the current challenges for the refugees' integration in Egypt.

Egypt made a number of reservations to the 1951 Convention, which resulted in Egypt's international duties being reduced and numerous refugee rights being curtailed. Egypt made five reservations to the 1951 Convention, all of which directly contribute to hindering the refugees' integration by restricting many of the rights to which they are entitled. Articles 12(1), 20, 22(1), 23, and 24 are the ones to which Egypt has expressed reservations(Shelton, 1983). These restrictions apply to provisions dealing with refugees' access to basic rights and services in order to be integrated in the asylum state. Articles on primary education rights, labor legislation and social security, public relief and aid, and rationing all received reservations. Other member states made no objections to these reservations, thus Egypt is under no international responsibility to implement these five provisions, according to international law. Egypt's participation in the five reservations has limited refugees' rights and disguised the Egyptian government's legal responsibility to them. These observations hampered the refugees' access to work and education, posing fresh problems in their lives in Egypt (Fabos A. 2015). Furthermore, the Egyptian government has yet to build any domestic legislation or institutional framework to address refugee challenges. Refugees are treated as foreigners in the eyes of the law, and the laws that regulate foreigners apply to refugees. Egypt has also yet to construct a legislative mechanism or an organization that legislates or permits the registration of asylum seekers who enter the nation. The Egyptian government has two governmental entities that deal with extremely restricted refugee issues. The Department of Refugee Affairs is the first government department, and it primarily issues letters to get residence permits. The second is the Ministry of the Interior, which gives residency permits to asylum seekers and refugees (El-Shaarawi, 2015).

In addition to the aforementioned reservations, the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and Egypt has made the integration for refugees more difficult. The Egyptian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNHCR in 1954 to govern 'process as well as other refugee services. The Egyptian government's role is limited to issuing "residence permits" to refugees recognized by the UNHCR. Egypt likewise rejected local integration as a long-term refugee option, "explicitly stressing that only repatriation or relocation are to be considered as the long-term answer in Egypt." Refusing local integration as a long-term solution in Article 2(b) and (c) of the MOU is an obvious breach of the 1951 Convention. Egypt made no reservations in the Convention regarding local integration, implying that Egypt has an international obligation to consider local integration as a long-term solution following ratification (Badawy, 2010).

Challenges for Local Integration in Urban Societies; African Refugees in Cairo

Refugees who flee their countries escaping a fear of prosecution face one of three durable solutions: Being resettled to another country, repatriate voluntarily to their country of origin or locally integrate in the country of asylum. However, with less than 142,901 resettled or repatriated to their country of origin, local integration is the only left option as a durable solution (UNHCR 2020). However, there are some challenges facing the only applicable durable option; local integration. Local integration is a gradual process of which takes into account legal, economic,

social, and cultural aspects. These requirements must be addressed in order to provide the ideal atmosphere for implementing this long-term solution.

The following section will present the current challenges in each dimension within local integration.

- Social and Cultural Dimension

An integral part of achieving local integration is for the refugees to be able to blend in the host communities, culturally and socially. However, there are certain challenges in this area. First, the social aspect in local integration includes equal access to services without any kind of discrimination, services as education, healthcare and employment. In order to assist integration and minimize obstacles, opportunities in various domains must be made available. Given the absence of services provided to African refugees, the current situation in Egypt is challenging. Refugees are often limited to services offered by non-governmental organizations, which are often underfunded and understaffed. Access to services for African refugees is unequal, and finding service providers is difficult. Furthermore, due to language and cultural obstacles, African refugees in Cairo remain isolated. Therefore, we find African refugees in Cairo clustered in some neighborhoods such as Faisal, Ard Lewa, and Ain Shams and in some informal labor sectors. These barriers obstruct not just social integration but also cultural integration. Integration is complicated by a lack of cultural awareness. At both the societal and community levels, this is true. Refugees are unfamiliar with Egyptian culture and language, making it difficult for them to integrate into Egyptian society (IOM. (2008). On a societal level, the Egyptian people is uninformed of its own customs and culture, making interaction difficult. This could be accomplished by establishing cultural and linguistic programs to assist both the local and refugee populations in acclimating to

one another. Knowing the language and understanding basic social standards are essential for refugees to adjust to life in Egypt.

Individuals' social integration is aided significantly by education. Given the language, cultural, and social challenges that refugees face, educational options are critical in overcoming some of these obstacles. Education assists persons fleeing rural areas in developing the required skills to participate actively in the employment market. Theoretically, utilising these refugees' strengths would provide them with better career prospects(UNHCR 2021). It's also worth noting that accessibility to public education and contact with locals will give the crucial stepping stones for social integration and societal norm adaption. However, refugees have significant challenges in obtaining educational services, which are restricted by legal constraints as well as behaviors that make it illegal for undocumented migrants to attend public schools. In Egypt, sub-Saharan refugees were limited to informal education (Grabska, 2006) However, with the Syrian conflict and the flood of refugees, education policy has shifted recently. This change permitted Syrian refugees to register in public schools as citizens. Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Somalis, on the other hand, were still denied access to public school (UNHCR, 2021). This demonstrates the unequal access to education in asylum-seeking countries around the world; according to UNHCR data from 2021, just 50% of refugees have access to primary education and 25% to secondary school.

- Economic Dimension

Access to employment is a difficulty because many refugees have gotten informally integrated into the labor market. Although Egypt has not placed a restriction on Articles 17 and 18, which deal with employment, they do require work permits, which are difficult to get. Egypt treats refugees as foreigners, which means they require work permits and are typically paid more for their labor,

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discouraging businesses from recruiting them. As a result, employers face greater taxes when hiring non-Egyptian nationals, creating a barrier to employment (Bakewell 2000). Women are frequently employed as domestic workers and housekeepers, whereas men are typically employed as low skilled workers on a temporary basis. Although their employment is illegal, they are not harassed by the authorities. They do not, however, enjoy the same benefits as those who are engaged in the formal labor sector. Refugees are paid less and have no social or health insurance, which makes them more vulnerable. Sudanese refugees sell watches, bags, belts, and other items on the street in order to earn a better living (Grabska, 2005). However, this puts them in danger because street vendors are frequently harassed and raided by the authorities. To be able to work, refugees must pay bribes to the police, and some are arrested while others have their belongings confiscated. Higher educated refugees, on the other hand, are more likely to seek job in teaching and translation; nevertheless, because Egyptian schools do not hire refugees, those who work in teaching in Egyptian schools earn less than Egyptian teachers do. Given the high demand for teaching and translating positions in refugee settlements, only a select number are able to pursue these careers, and most end up working in jobs such as maintenance, cleaning, office work, drivers, and gardeners. Because of the aforementioned situation, the refugee community is frustrated because they see no hope for their condition. Men and women are in desperate need of a solution to their worsening livelihood as they struggle to find stable jobs with suitable pay (Ayoub and Johnson 2014). Many people are unable to meet their everyday demands because they lack an income strategy. Many people have been forced into the informal labor market due to the unstable job environment and the difficulty in getting work permits. The limitation and restriction within the Egyptian policies to be integrated in the formal work sector, have contributed in generating a stereotype of discrimination and racism form the local population against African refuges, leading higher levels of vulnerability and disempowerment of African refugees (Gozdziak and Walter 2012).

- Legal Dimension

The legal aspect of the concept of local integration is framed by the international treaties, conventions, national laws and UN practices and protocols that frame the rights directed toward refugees. However, the legal framework has been negatively contributing to the concept of local integration. Firstly, the definition of refugees who deserve the right of asylum has been criticized from many scholars due to its vagueness and delegating an arbitrary right of state to choose who is a refugee (Jones, M. 2015). Secondly, the lack of enforcement stems from the fact that international law cannot compel member nations to act. International law establishes certain rights and obligations for refugees that should be binding on all parties to any international agreement, but it "fails to constrain the states on how to carry out this determination." Another critique that may be added to the above is the lack of a framework for monitoring and evaluating states' performance in relation to refugees' rights, as well as a consistent pattern for tracking how well nations adhere to binding treaties. This vagueness in the laws allows states to interpret them differently, to the point that it leaves States to depend upon domestic or regional legislation. Thirdly, the UN practices contribute in hindering local integration as a durable solution, through its lengthy process and limited protection services for the refugees. In addition, the lack of comprehensive and extensive integration policies and programs leaves nationals with misconceptions and misunderstandings. Egyptians have no idea who refugees are, what they do, why they fled their countries, or what their rights are in the asylum/refugee state. The misunderstanding Egyptians hold regarding refugees' position in Egypt contributes to the gap between refugees, particularly African refugees (Landau, L. (2004).

Concerns shared by countries of asylum regarding local integration

After presenting the legal framework for local integration in Egypt, its different dimensions and current challenges facing African refuges in Cairo. The following part will focus on the concerns shared by host governments; as Egypt, hindering local integration from being achieved and the benefits falling on the Egyptian society in case of achieving it.

Different stakeholders in the local integration of refugees have expressed a variety of concerns. Security issues, a lack of money, a resource load, and a lack of political and public will are among them.

On an international, national, societal, and individual level, security concerns are a key impediment to local integration. The present political unrest in Egypt, as well as around the world, has influenced popular sentiment on the refugee situation. Terrorism has frequently been falsely connected to an increase in the flow of refugees (Bernstein, J. 2005). National security concerns and international obligations to persons displaced by wars have influenced political will, and official persecution has come to an end. Refugees find it difficult to integrate into society because of the perceived threat they provide. However, one of the numerous roadblocks to local integration is security concerns (Yossef, A., & Cerami, J. 2015).

A major element for the lack of major policy toward local integration is the anticipated financial and resource burden on host nations that absorb refugees. This perception of financial and environmental resource load leads to a reluctance to accept local integration on both a national and individual level. The local community is usually concerned that the rise in population caused by the influx of refugees will cause a burden on their land, housing, schools, and health facilities. Local residents also fear losing their jobs to migrants, however this is unlikely given the lack of work rights afforded to refugees (Bernstein, J., & Okello, M. C. 2007).

Another highlighted concern comes from the donors. Donors are concerned about the funds spent to assist refugees. Given that many people are not self-sufficient and rely substantially on help, this puts a pressure on donors' and international organizations' financial resources. This is due in part to constraints on work and educational rights, as it is impossible for people to completely rely on themselves without a steady source of income.

Ultimately, both refugees and the local community are concerned about their interactions. Local populations and refugee communities are both unaware of the various cultural differences and hence do not communicate. Local integration must therefore be on a social level; challenges appear when refugee populations remain in their particular areas and the local populace does not welcome them. In order to promote local integration, the interaction between the two entities is critical. Previous literature revealed that many refugees prefer to stay in their familiar surroundings, which could be due to the local population's lack of knowledge about the refugee crisis (Buscher, D. 2003). Refugee populations are becoming stigmatized, finding it challenging for them to participate fully in society.

Benefits falling on the Egyptian Society from Local Integration

The contributions and benefits that results from achieving local integration on the Egyptian society can be seen on a national and an international levels.

On a national level, with the new policies that President Abdel Fatah El Sisi started the new economic policy changes that started in 2016, aiming for a diverse economy, stronger private sector and more foreign investments; under the name of "The New Republic "(الجمهورية الجديدة). Locally integrating African refugees in the Egyptian formal sector of economy will be aligning with the aforementioned strategy of the government. It is a common misperception that refugees enter a host country and live off benefits rather than working. Though not all countries allow refugees to work, those that do recognize how valuable refugees can be. Refugees are notorious for starting from the ground up. Phillipe Legrain, an economic counsellor, predicts that 1,000 immigrant enterprises might produce \$100 million per year (Legrain, 2019). If host countries relax their restrictions and allow refugees to broaden their job options, their economy will benefit tremendously. This would also include making language learning and integration courses more accessible, but the financial benefits would outweigh the costs in the long term. Countries that enable refugees to work and start businesses understand that increased productivity is one of the most significant advantages of accepting refugees.

The greater the number of individuals involved in a country's economy, the better. One of the numerous advantages of accepting migrants is increased economic activity. Allowing refugees into a country necessitates an upfront commitment (Legrain, 2022). Housing, language classes, medical care, and food All of these items are expensive to offer, but once migrants have established themselves in their new nation, the initial investment pays off. Refugees establish firms that hire

locals, generate income, and pay taxes. Young refugees entering the workforce in nations with an older worker supplement their labor and enable them to retire while paying to social security or pension systems. Working and earning money allows refugees to contribute to the economy of their host country in general. Refugees who are allowed to work and start businesses are significantly better for the economy than those who are not allowed to come or work (Thelwell, 2018).

On an international level, locally integrating African refugees in the Egyptian society will work on completing the new strategy followed by the government that President Abdel Fatah El Sisi started in 2020, to maximize the government efforts in achieving Human Rights according to the international scales. This was reflected in starting the first National Council for Human Rights and prioritizing human rights in all the aforementioned aspects. Therefore, locally integrating African refugees will be on the same page with the government's strategy for human rights. In addition to that, locally integrating African refugees in Cairo will help in creating a dominating image for Egypt within the African level. This image, will serve in the benefit of the soft power of Egypt within the continent, leading to more benefits for Egypt in current challenges as the "Renaissance Dam" in Ethiopia, as it will work on supporting the Egyptian side from other African countries. Moreover, taking steps toward local integration of African refugees will export an image to the international community that will help in increasing the foreign investments in Egypt, and the development funds directs to Egypt. As there was a lot of restrictions on the aid directed to Egypt under the name of human rights policies (Tiedemann, P. 2012).

Policy Recommendations

In order to improve local integration of refugees in Egypt, cultural and social components of local integration must always be addressed. This would entail creating an environment that celebrates variety rather than portraying it negatively. This might be as easy as holding cultural festivals and exchanging experiences with the local community. Accepting and celebrating cultural differences creates social relationships, which strengthens local integration. Access to health, education, employment, and legal assistance are all social dimensions. Refugees can only be integrated into Egyptian schools once the language gap is eliminated, as it is difficult for them to attend public schools because they do not know the language.

It is vital to recognize the weaknesses in the current structure. Discrimination and maltreatment of refugees in Egypt must be highlighted. They recognized police abuse against refugees as one of the problems of legal integration in Nairobi, Kenya. This emphasizes the importance of initiatives that ensure refugees receive equal treatment and protection.

Economic integration must take place on a societal level, which necessitates the creation of more job possibilities. Because refugees have a difficult time finding work, there must be rules safeguarding those who are employed. Because of their informal employment, refugees are frequently susceptible to abuse without insurance. In Egypt, the lack of employment rights makes it nearly impossible to make a living. As a result, creating protection measures in terms of employment is vital to integration, as is providing opportunities in the labour market. However, encouraging business within refugee populations will aid in the creation of a sustainable existence for Egyptian refugees. The concept of wealth burden is frequently used to create barriers to local integration. The resource burden concept is used on a local and societal scale, and it arises from a lack of understanding of the potential contributions refugees might make to the host government. Refugees, on the other hand, have been shown in the research to be advantageous to economic development. Given the abilities they provide, putting them to work in the workforce could lead to growth.

It is critical to raise community awareness and encourage contact amongst communities. There is no actual interaction because many refugee populations are secluded and stay within their separate enclaves. As a result, these populations are marginalized, and the host communities lack cultural awareness. In Egypt, public opinion is crucial in the protection of refugees. Increasing public awareness by offering more opportunities for contact would lead to a better knowledge of various cultures. To support the greatest solution to the refugee issue, it is critical that all stakeholders communicate. Miscommunication among partners creates a hostile climate for local integration.

Finally, revising of implemented legislation is required to guarantee that local integration is facilitated, and so review of reservations made to the 1951 convention is necessary. Because of their constraints on crucial parts of refugees' livelihood, the convention reservations have clearly caused problems to local integration of refugees. This has limited their options and continuously made life difficult for them. The Memorandum is also a vital piece of law that has to be revisited in order to facilitate local refugee assimilation.

Conclusion

After presenting all the dimensions of the concept of local integration and challenges, that hinders African refugees from being locally integrated, socially, culturally, economically and legally and the views of host governments. The conclusion shall highlight the main findings of the research paper.

Local integration failures cause irritation and a loss of hope among immigrant groups who are unsure of their position in the country. Their ability to grow in society is hindered by the lack of work and educational options. The communication gap between refugee communities and the local community contributes to the country's isolation of refugees. Xenophobic inclinations are attributed to lack of awareness among local inhabitants. Discrimination spreads throughout the country, demonstrating the government's failure to safeguard local refugee groups. Lack of integration also places a financial strain on foreign and nonprofit groups. Many people struggle to become self-sufficient and rely on financial aid and other services to meet their basic requirements.

Steps toward local integration cannot be taken without taken into consideration the concerns shared by the host countries and various stakeholders that hinders local integration. Concerns as national security, financial burden and donors instable funding. However, what should not be ignored is the impact falling on host countries from achieving local integration. As promoting the concept of local integration for African refugees in urban setting in Cairo is mutually beneficial, both for the African refugees and for the host governments. The positive impact that shall be received on Egypt from promoting local integration as a durable solution for African refugees include national impact as a more diverse economy and a wider private sector. While empathizing on the new strategies followed by President El Sisi, a more dominant and influential image will be exported to the international community, supporting the Egyptian side on various current topics, leading to a higher flow of investments into the Egyptian economy, which serves into the new economic reform policies that El Sisi started in 2016. Therefore, working on a policy reform that serves in tailoring the needed legal framework for achieving local integration for African refugees, prioritizing social and cultural communication and economic integration shall be perceived as a mutual benefit for bother refugees communities and the government.

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